

12/8/11

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Good afternoon, I'm Sky Anderson, my family has a ranch north of Livingston where we do the "cow thing". I am here on behalf of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation. Our Pres. Bob Hanson and V.P. Bruce Wright are both at the National Farm Bureau Convention in Atlanta so you all have to put up with the C-Squad today.

I would like to bring up a few issues that concern many ag operations across the state with an underlying emphasis on PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS.

- 1- Whether we burn a pile of leaves, repair an irrigation structure in a creek, or spray some weeds, it seems as though whatever task there is to be completed on the ranch, it requires a notification, or a permit, or a license. I think we need to move the other way for a while and loosen up the bureaucracy and regulations so we can conduct our business on PRIVATE PROPERTY in a more efficient manner.
- 2- We believe the trespass fines, on PRIVATE PROPERTY, should be increased to a minimum of \$5000 dollars and a forfeiture of hunting and fishing privileges. As it stands, our law enforcement officers (Sheriff or Game wardens) don't prosecute violators because the fines are so minimal. This results in the perps repeating the offense, and they are hard to catch in the first place.
- 3- We are being overrun with elk on our ranch and I'm not sure wolves are the answer; rather the wolves are responsible for pushing the elk north from the park so the herd on our place is now about 1,000 head. No, we do not allow open public hunting on our ranch but we do have controlled hunting on the place and harvest a fair number of elk along with deer and antelope. We approached the Fish and Game 20 years ago about either sex tags, but by the time they allowed that, the battle was lost. At some point there needs to be compensation for public wildlife grazing on PRIVATE PROPERTY.
- 4- Along the same lines, the buffalo, need to remain livestock in the state of Montana and be taxed as such. At no time should the buffalo become free ranging wildlife. Furthermore, the Yellowstone Park buffalo (public buffalo) need to STAY in the park (public property) and OFF PRIVATE PROPERTY.
- 5- The brucellosis problem in our state is a result of public wildlife mingling with our private livestock. While it would be preferred to put the entire burden of cleaning up the infected wildlife on our park service and the Fish and Game at minimum, we, the livestock producers need to have more input as to the "Designated Surveillance Area" since this affects our PRIVATE PROPERTY.
- 6- I would like to talk about property taxes and the changes that took place last year. The taxes on our ranch increased 53.6% over 2008 due to the reappraisal process. I had to check my GPS to make sure we were still in MT rather than Venezuela! After 4 months of dealing with our tax assessor's office we were able to reduce

that down to 21.4%. Still, a huge increase. If we had a better way of implementing and phasing in the changes, could we avoid the costly litigation and large number of appeals?

- 7- I don't believe we should allow state and federal entities to purchase private property with tax dollars. I do believe there is enough public property already; we just need to retain access to those lands rather than close them up behind the "wilderness lock and chain". I also believe we should PROMOTE harvesting our natural resources on these lands, obviously creating more and better JOBS for our state. Also, this would help to solve the funding challenges for our schools and government. It pains me to watch our neighbors Wyoming and North Dakota successfully utilizing their natural resources while we are only partially utilizing our own.
- 8- We support renewable energy, but we would encourage you all running our state to NOT socialize the costs of renewable or "green" energy. This country was built on the FREE MARKET SYSTEM and we need to keep it that way. Let's not subsidize every "feel good" cause and rather, let our energy industries succeed on their own merits.
- 9- Lastly, I will mention again, Agriculture is our number 1 industry in the state of Montana. We expect it will remain so. Please legislate in a manner that will enable us, not hinder us, so we may remain a viable industry and provide the jobs and commodities this state needs.

Good luck during this upcoming session, I hope you get the state fiscally responsible and thank you for your time.